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## NOTES.

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### ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN FORGERY.

For the sake of warning possible purchasers, let me add another to the catalogue of Babylonian forgeries described by M. Ménant in the last number of the *American Journal of Archæology*.

I received three days ago, from a learned correspondent in Constantinople, photographs of a table, or "altar," said to be in "copper bronze," and "patinated so as to leave little room for doubt of its antiquity." Its top is like a box three inches long by nearly two and a half inches wide, and an inch thick. It is supported on four straight legs fashioned like those of an ox. From each end of the two sides there stand out the neck and head of an ox with short curved horns, projecting an inch from the side. The top and at least one of the two ends are adorned with groups of figures in low relief surprisingly like those on some cylinders.

A careful examination reveals the forgery. The figures are evidently taken not directly from cylinders, but from casts of cylinders, the originals not being at the command of the forger. Of the two designs on the top of the "altar," the upper represents Gisdubar holding up in each hand a griffin by the hind leg. Above and about the group is an inscription in cuneiform characters, at the right and left edge is an ornamental design: on being closely inspected this design is that of *one half* of the Assyrian sacred tree. It is evident that the forger had in his possession a cast from the seal which had been carefully made so as to duplicate nothing, and to represent the deity and the griffins in the middle. This required the splitting of the sacred tree vertically through the middle leaving its two halves at the two ends of the cast. It is inconceivable that an Assyrian artist could have so mutilated this tree. The original design may be attributed to the period of Sargon, when these peculiar eagle-headed griffins were much affected. Below this group is another, also evidently taken from a plaster cast. But this time the design is not of an Assyrian type, but Babylonian, and decidedly archaic, belonging to a period not less than a thousand years an-

terior to that of the Assyrian group. The combination of the two is impossible in a genuine antique.

As it occurred to me that I was familiar with the cylinder from which the Assyrian group was taken, I examined the casts in my possession, and soon convinced myself that I could fully identify the cylinder. It is a beautiful red chalcedonic quartz, belonging to the Rev. Henry Fairbanks, of St. Johnsbury, Vt. Not only is the group the same (not otherwise known), but the inscription also has been copied, so that we find on the left the words *Kunuk Zabri*, "Cylinder of Zabri," and, on the right his filiation, *Mar Papari*, "Son of Papari." The forger happens to have duplicated the character *pa*, so as to read *Papari*, in place of *Pari*, as it is on the original cylinder. We thus have this object which, whatever it is designed to represent, table or altar, is certainly *not* a cylinder-seal, designated by its inscription as such a seal. The inscription itself proves the forgery. By a remarkable coincidence, the second of the groups, also, is taken from a cylinder belonging to Mr. Fairbanks. It is not so well copied as the Assyrian one, although that leaves much to be desired. The proportions are not very well kept in either case, and the inscription of the upper group, beside doubling the *pa*, shows other marks of ignorance. Two curious blunders appear in the second, or Babylonian group. Heabani loses his bull-like body, and becomes quite human; and the indistinct inscription between the divine bull and Heabani has become transformed into an absurd short man with a high double pointed mitre. On the end is another group, equally taken from the impression of a cylinder. From the imperfect photograph it is impossible to describe it further than by saying that it is old-Babylonian, of an antiquity much beyond that of the first Assyrian group.

As this very peculiar forgery would be likely to deceive any but an expert, and as it is likely to be the forerunner of other objects from the same skilful workshop, it is well to put the purchasing public on guard against this new and taking fraud.

WILLIAM HAYES WARD.

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